

Amendments to the Specification:

Please substitute the following replacement paragraphs into the specification wherein patent publication numbers have been identified as suggested by the Examiner.

[0039] Temperature-controlled reagent storage areas 26, 27 and 28 store a plurality of multi-compartment elongate reagent cartridges 30 like that illustrated in FIG. 3 and described in patent publication number 2003-0049848 co-pending application Ser. No.: 09/949,132 assigned to the assignee of the present invention, and containing reagents in wells 32 as necessary to perform a given assay. A lock-out device 31 is provided to prevent accidental re-use of a previously used reagent container 30. Reagent storage area 26 comprises at least one reagent operation carousel where operations like reagent preparation and reagent aspiration take place. Reagent containers 30 may be loaded by an operator by placing such containers 30 into a container loading tray 29 adapted to automatically translate containers 30 to a shuttling position as described in patent publication number 2005-0013735 co-pending application Ser. No.: 10/____,____, assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

[0040] As seen in FIG. 4, a bi-directional incoming and outgoing sample fluid tube transport system 34 described in patent publication number 2003-0049848 co-pending application Ser. No.: 09/949,132, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, comprises an input lane 35 and an output lane 36 formed along a top operating surface of analyzer 10. Input lane 35, taken with a magnetic drive system described in said co-pending application, transports sample fluid tube racks 38 containing open or closed sample fluid containers such as sample fluid tubes 40 from a rack input load position 41 at a first end of the input lane 35 right-to-left along the length of input lane 35 as indicated by open arrow 35A. A liquid sampling aliquotter 42, exemplifying the present invention and described hereinafter, is located proximate a second end of the input lane 35 opposite the first end of lane 35. Once a rack 38 containing sample fluid tubes 40 is proximate aliquotter 42, rack 38 may be retained in a liquid sampling zone 43 by a shuttle mechanism 39 while aliquotter 42 is operable to aspirate aliquot portions of sample fluid from sample fluid tubes 40 and to dispense an aliquot portion of the sample fluid into one or more of a plurality of vessels 44V in aliquot vessel array 44, seen in FIG. 5 and described in patent publication number 2003-0129095 co-pending application Ser. No.: 10/____,____.

10/_____, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, depending on the quantity of sample fluid required to perform the requisite assays and to provide for a sample fluid aliquot to be retained by analyzer 10 within environmental chamber 48 described in patent publication number 2002-0064881 co-pending application Ser. No.: 09/827,045, assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

[0045] Reaction cuvette load station 63 and reaction vessel load station 65 are respectively positioned proximate outer cuvette carousel 14 and inner vessel carousel 16 and are adapted to load reaction cuvettes 24 into cuvette ports 20 and reaction vessels 25 into vessel ports 22 using for example a sliding chute 67. In operation, used cuvettes 24 in which an assay has been finally conducted, are washed and dried in a wash station 71 like disclosed in patent publication number 2005/0014274 co-pending application Ser. No. ____/____ assigned to the assignee of the present invention. Subsequent assays are conducted in cleaned used cuvettes 24 unless dictated otherwise for reasons like disclosed in co-pending application Ser. No. 10/318,804 assigned to the assignee of the present invention. Cuvette unload station 59 is adapted to remove unusable reaction cuvettes 24 from cuvette ports 20 again using a translatable robotic arm 65 like that on load stations 63 and 65.